

Indigenous Peoples Policy for the Green Climate Fund

Inputs from Conservation International

A Green Climate Fund (GCF) Indigenous Peoples' Policy would help ensure the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples in the GCF and its activities. This policy should go beyond provisions to minimize the potential harm to indigenous peoples and local communities, but also empower indigenous peoples and local communities to engage with and benefit from the GCF. By utilizing the knowledge of indigenous peoples in mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change and building their capacity to participate in the Fund's activities, the GCF will enhance the effectiveness, equity, sustainability and transformational potential of its outcomes.

Conservation International (CI) has worked with indigenous peoples and their communities in addressing some of the concerns that the GCF has with regards climate change—from capacity building to convening. CI first adopted an Indigenous Peoples' Policy in 1996, and revised that policy in 2003 and 2012. CI's Indigenous Peoples' Policy recognizes that indigenous communities have rights to their lands, territories and livelihoods and ensures that all of CI's activities respect indigenous peoples and their rights. The purpose of this policy is to ensure CI carries out its mission to empower human societies to responsibly and sustainably care for nature, our global biodiversity, through a Rights-based Approach (RBA) that respects indigenous peoples and their rights. The development of such a Fund-wide policy would benefit from ensuring the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples and local communities. A number of global initiatives, programs and institutions have developed specific IP policies which can be a resource for the GCF in identifying best practices in developing policies related to indigenous peoples.

CI supports the following as essential elements of an Indigenous Peoples' Policy:

1. Full recognition and operationalization of the principles and procedures of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) – The GCF must ensure that it incorporates full implementation of FPIC in its project requirement guidelines, including clear conditions for which FPIC is always required during project preparation, monitoring and evaluation stages. A clear procedure and best practice guidance on FPIC should accompany the policy.
2. Enhancing the rights of indigenous peoples to their lands, territories and resources – It has been shown that when indigenous peoples have control over their lands, these are better managed, which results in significant climate benefits. The GCF should strive to encourage project proponents to ensure that the rights of indigenous peoples are enhanced and not diminished through their actions.
3. Respect for traditional knowledge – Indigenous peoples have developed a special body of knowledge related to their environment. This knowledge can be harnessed to respond to climate change issues, but only with the full agreement and consent of the people involved. The GCF, through its Indigenous Peoples' Policy, should call for the respect and protection of the rights of these knowledge holders.

4. Maintaining an effective grievance mechanism – This would allow indigenous communities adversely affected by GCF projects to lodge protests in culturally appropriate ways. It can include measures that would recognize multiple mechanisms for resolving conflicts that arise from GCF projects, such as, for example, recognizing alternative methods of compensation if needed.
5. Ensuring adequate GCF staff capacity – GCF should employ the appropriate indigenous safeguard expertise as part of the institutional safeguard team to ensure the capacity to assess compliance with the policy at key decision points in all stages of the project cycle and in the accreditation and independent redress process.
6. Enhancing capacity building – The GCF should help to build the capacity of indigenous peoples and as part of its Indigenous Peoples’ Policy. The capacity of indigenous peoples to access GCF funds should be developed, as well as the capacity of the GCF to address indigenous peoples’ concerns. Additionally, National Designated Authorities (NDA) and GCF board members, and the Secretariat should be supported to enhance their knowledge on the specific concerns of indigenous peoples.
7. Facilitating direct access – The policy should guide GCF efforts to provide direct access to GCF grant funding by eligible indigenous peoples organizations, which involve appropriate requirements that recognize the achievements of indigenous peoples in climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as their institutional capacity.